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# Fame Gone Wild (2015: An Era of Self-Invention)

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Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts  
Graduate School of Art  
Washington University in St. Louis

# **FAME GONE WILD**

## **2015: AN ERA OF SELF-INVENTION**

By  
Stephanie Kang

A thesis presented to the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
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# ABSTRACT

Entertainment has become one of the fueling fires of society. In today's world of nonstop broadcasting and streaming, many begrudgingly trudge through their 9 to 5's only to live for their few post-work hours of leisure, which have been reserved for this week's latest items on the viewing queue. Netflix and Hulu have become the opium of the masses. Consequently, this obsession with constant entertainment has now morphed into a shared yearning for the people that are watched and followed religiously through the screen – the celebrities. In this cultural moment, the concept of fame has become a vital element of society.

Additionally, this desire for a celebrity often times distorts itself into a desire to *become* that celebrity, especially within the millennial mind sight. (After all, mimicry is the greatest form of flattery, or rather, admiration.) Through my art practice, I address this trajectory from mere observer to active participant within the viewing process. By tracking the psychological effects of this movement, both on the individual and societal level, I question my own place within this pattern of continual obsession and its effects on my perceptions of self, other, and reality.

This thesis works as a consolidative piece of writing, fusing my research of pop cultural issues regarding the manipulation of personal and collective identities with my work as an artist. Providing contemporary examples of this issue's relation to celebrity culture, ranging from Michael Jackson's sudden passing to the recent demise of the Jonas Brothers, I correlate the impact and role of the celebrity with my own videos, performances, and installations.

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# **1: INTRODUCTION**

## **THE EFFECTS OF MTV SHOCK**

*“If you grow up just watching MTV, that’s its own form of religion,  
and it’s not even based on happiness or communal responsibility.  
I mean, try to construct a worldview out of that.”*

- Win Butler of Arcade Fire<sup>1</sup>

I grew up in a bubble – a predominantly white, God-fearing, suburbanized bubble. And in an era of Britney Spears’ seductive gyrating, these conservative, religious communities used modern technological advancements to further solidify their separation from secular heathenism – thus was the dawn of parental TV controls. It wasn’t until I was thirteen that I learned how to hack the system and had my first encounter with MTV: sleazy spring breakers in Cancun screaming and woo-ing into the camera, Johanna from *The Real World: Austin* hooking up with the local bartender amidst muffled whispers and giggles from her fellow housemates, Eminem topping the charts and spitting out morally questionable (although totally genius) rhymes on the latest episode of *TRL*. It was the Sodom and Gomorrah of my generation, and I loved every mind-numbing second of it. This was the starting point of my obsession with pop culture, celebrities, and consumerism. After years of deprivation as a child, I had become an addict.

The effect of excessive television viewing is not a new topic of discussion. In 1955, author John Steinbeck shared his perspective on the issue, stating,

“I have observed the physical symptoms of television-looking on children as well as on adults. The mouth grows slack and the lips hang open; the eyes take on a hypnotized or doped look; the nose runs rather more than usual; the backbone turns to water and the fingers slowly and methodically pick the designs out of brocade furniture. Such is the

appearance of semiconsciousness that one wonders how much of the  
'message' of television is getting through the brain."<sup>2</sup>

Yet sixty year after Steinbeck's biting observations, society has now moved past this antiquated model of escape solely within the space containing the "brocade furniture" that he references. Rather, "television watching" has been mobilized and is no longer confined to a living room setting, and in turn, the need for constant entertainment has become fully ingrained into everyday life. With the invention of modern day Apple products and Google glasses, viewers have become a society of cyborgs bound and fixated to the screen. As they move, the screen moves with them.

While there are those that see these technological advancements as a burden, I have learned to embrace them and flourish under these conditions. Thus, as a born and bred millennial artist, who thrives on these mass media overindulgences of constant Twitter updates and Netflix binge watching sessions, I reference images from pop culture that are prevalent and exhausting, like the Tumblr GIF, the viral video, and the celebrity photo. And while my videos and installations are often humorous and bizarrely quirky, they are reflective of mainstream America's superabundance – the classic clusterfuck of images.

However, considering the overindulgent, fully immersive nature of celebrity and social media obsession, I question the correlation between individual identity formation and a shared pop cultural illusion in my life and art practice. For example, what happens to my sense of identity when every clothing purchase I make gets me closer and closer to looking like Miley Cyrus? By dressing like Miley, can I then actually *become* like Miley? And why do I choose to create my own voyeuristic escape by binge watching sleazy cable network reality shows, like *The Real World* and *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*? Essentially, I want to be a part of *The Real World* to escape the real

world. Thus, the real and the contrived have become interwoven into a narrative of the personal and the collective, in which my identity has become a self-constructed manipulation that fits my internal desires for drama, notoriety, and belonging.

## 2: TOTUS MUNDUS AGIT HISTRIONEM THE WHOLE WORLD PLAYS THE ACTOR

*"You are never required to be yourself;  
whatever you do, there is another,  
alternative you standing invisibly to one side,  
observing, evaluating, remembering."*

- John Banville, *The Untouchable*<sup>3</sup>

Living with this condition of pop culture obsession, I have become accustomed to constantly viewing others through the screen and habitually criticizing the characters that attempt to showcase themselves through guilty-pleasure programming. Consequently, I have learned to carefully curate myself for the public, preparing for the day that I might too get the chance to be seen and judged before an audience. Thus, by choosing and adopting certain fashions, hairstyles, dialects, and mannerisms, I can control the associations that will be made regarding my character, personality, and overall identity based solely on these simple, exteriorly contrived traits. It is through this practice that my understanding of the self has become increasingly distorted through self-inventions as I have become more and more conscious of my image and its public perception.

I believe that the world has become a stage for performance in contemporary society, in which "this heightened level of attention encourages an over-valuation of self-presentation."<sup>4</sup> By taking on the role of a public actor, I have worked tirelessly to be recognized, liked, and avoid anonymity, and concurrently, a loss of identity. The desire to fabricate identity has been embraced by popular society, and in fact, it has become the cultural standard of normality. Essentially, the self is open to invention. According to Joanne Finkelstein, "At minimum the self is bifurcated, it has a double; there is the conscious and unconscious, private and public, civilized and base, good and bad,

and we can create ourselves as well-rounded beings from the management of these seemingly opposed elements.”<sup>5</sup>

As an artist aware of this possibility of bifurcation through self-fabrication, I have used self-broadcasting to break down societal constructions of identity from within my epicenter as a social actor. Evaluating my background as a second generation Korean-American that has been largely influenced by a whitewashed culture, I implemented this notion in my early series of work by creating an alter ego “Kang Eunhae,” a physical representation of my Korean self. Through this character, I illustrated issues of identity formation by taking on a unique position as a human caught in a purgatorial position between two worlds – the West and the East. Growing up in an Americanized household with little connection to my ethnic background, I used Korean dramas, television shows, and music to inform me on cultural traditions and expectations, attempting to fulfill my need to assimilate to contemporary Korean culture. It is through this observation of Asian pop culture from a Westernized lens that I investigated the integration of these two cultures into a wholly distinct sense of identity that does not fully adhere to either group and, thus, has no sense of stability or belonging.

In the video *Jamji Jumokbap (Tuna Rice Balls)*, I played with stereotypical images of Asian women that come from pop culture and mass media, integrating them into a figure that precariously balances between the desirable and the perverse. By examining these opposing forces, I blurred any barriers that served as dividing lines, suggesting an inseparable linkage between erotic attraction and repulsion. While a borderline allows for an understanding of the pure self, its elimination presents a liminal space in which the self and the other can interact. It is the twofold nature of my

performance that forces the audience to question the internal duality that exists within sexuality and the body.



Figure 1

By revealing the understanding of my body as a physical manifestation of Asian femininity, I also emphasized its position as a place of spectacle. The video begins with a cooking tutorial for tuna rice balls, a hybridized snack that includes rice, canned tuna, mayo, and sesame seeds. While this opening segment has a sickeningly adorable tone, this then soon morphs when “Kang Eunhae” removes her underwear and attempts to stir the assemblage using her genitals. Throughout the performance, this character uses the gaze as a source of power, looking towards the camera and disarming the viewer through her aggressive demand for acknowledgement. By playing with the Korean language by interchanging the term “chamchi” (tuna) with “jamji” (pussy), this piece challenges the sexualized imagery of Asian women that are perpetuated through television and pornography. Also, through the use of stereotypically feminine aesthetics intermingled with relatively crude elements, it attempts to manipulate cultural norms and conventions, regurgitating a wholly transformed understanding of cultural and gender roles.





Figure 2

Artist Alex Da Corte also embraced this concept of social acting in his 2013 video *TRUE LIFE*. Dressing up as Eminem's persona Slim Shady, Da Corte created a humorous scenario by repositioning the celebrity figure into a simple, everyday situation, away from the hyperreality of music videos and telecasted award ceremonies (although the video mimics the hyperreal in its setting). In the three minute, forty-four second video, he pours himself a bowl of Cinnamon Life cereal and eats it, all while piercingly staring at the camera. Concerning this piece, the artist commented,

"I kept noticing packaging of Cinnamon Life cereal with African-American people on it, and regular Life had white families, and I thought about that a while...I continued to think about it, absorbing a culture that you're not familiar with. Much of my work is about the skin of something, pulling it away and adding to it, disguising yourself – like costumes."

Taking on the persona of Eminem, a white rapper in a largely black genre, Da Corte juxtaposed the racially charged celebrity with prejudicial branding, confronting the

images and products that are fed to society on a daily basis, whether they be on the TV screen or in the aisle of the grocery store. The artist continued to state,

“In the world I run in, Eminem is not necessarily the most stand-up guy. He has a lot to say and he’s very angry. He’s kind of misunderstood, but I wanted to understand him, what it would be like to be that character. I wanted to speak to that while in a costume that’s contrary to his misogynistic music, somewhere between chav street wear and gay raver.”<sup>6</sup>

By becoming Eminem in this performance, Da Corte addressed issues of consumer branding, celebrity figures, and pop cultural archetypes while also questioning and seeking to understand each of these elements.



Figures 3-4

In contrast, my installation and performance *Running Man: Episode 195* also commented on these issues of identity conformation through celebrity, although through different channels. Recreating various challenges from *Running Man*, a Korean variety show that features cast members and celebrity guest stars partaking in a myriad of absurd tasks, I used these performances as a training period to become like the stars on the show. I attempted to put pants on without using my hands, eat a hot potato in less than thirty seconds, and jump on a painful acupressure mat to entertain

my viewers, replacing the Korean celebrities that are adored on a weekly basis. By parodying the insatiable fixation on the screen, I demonstrated the ridiculousness of this situation. It was also through this piece that I made my first attempt at becoming a celebrity.

### 3: THE FAME MACHINE

#### UNDERSTANDING CELEBRITY IMAGES AND ILLUSIONS

*"When the real world changes into simple images,  
simple images become real beings  
and effective motivations of a hypnotic behavior."*

-Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*<sup>7</sup>

In the 1980's classic *Fame*, directed by Alan Parker, the film follows the lives of a select group of New York high school students that attend a performing arts school in the city, and despite their differing talents in dance, music, and theater, they each share the same aspiration – to achieve fame. In the film's most emblematic scene, the students rush into the street and dance to the musical's title song that declares, "Fame! I'm gonna live forever. Baby, remember my name."<sup>8</sup> The chorus then repeats "remember" ad nauseam, as if it is hypnotically reminding its listeners to never forget that word. This song, a song that defined a generation, proclaims that if these young potential stars are able to achieve their dreams, then they will be able to live forever. However, in their eternal quest for fame, the students' desperation becomes more apparent as the film progresses; many go so far as to willingly sacrifice their friends, dignity, and innocence, all in the name of success and celebrityhood. But hey, it'll all be worth it in the end, right? *Remember, remember, remember, remember, remember, remember, remember, remember...*

Like the characters of *Fame*, many have aspired to be commemorated beyond their limited lifetimes, and one of the only possible methods to achieve this eternal existence of renown is through fame. According to Sean Redmond, "Celebrities are liquid figures because time can no longer be theirs, or their cultural intermediaries, to hold firm. They exist across numerous temporal and spatial dimensions."<sup>9</sup> To illustrate this fact, I will like to examine the career, life, and afterlife of the iconic pop sensation Michael

Jackson. In the 1970s, he was seen as an American hero, escaping the confines of the working class and rising to international fame; however, it was not until 1983 that he amazed the world with his signature move, the “moonwalk.” Through this illusionistic, entrancing dance, Jackson found his permanent place in pop cultural history as a god, being crowned as the King of Pop.

Although his adult life was overshadowed by accusations and ridicule, the nation outpoured its grief and mourning for the idol after his tragic death in 2009. Sony Pictures, attempting to satiate the public’s desire for the now absent Jackson, debuted *Michael Jackson’s This Is It* only four months after his passing, honoring and memorializing the deceased legend in a 111 minute-long documentary-concert hybrid. However, as Christopher Smit stated,

“To say that [*Michael Jackson’s This Is It*] is a ‘final’ document, an end to anything, is a mistake we must not make. Instead, we must realize that the spectacle of Jackson was never tempered by time or space, by memory, projections or representations, by substance or style. Instead, the spectacle of Jackson moved freely, as environments do. It was pliable at times, rigid at others. It was always visible, never forbidden, always consumable. And that is how it will remain now that he has died. And in many ways, the spectacle will now grow beyond anything it ever was while he was alive. In death, the spectacle finds energy.”

*This Is It* is a singular example of how Jackson has been perpetually reincarnated through posthumous albums and films, and it is through these various productions that he has been transformed into a modern day Lazarus, extending his name and image beyond the limitations of time and space. For Michael Jackson and any other celebrity, temporality can be overcome. Therefore, if we ever hope to achieve this level of immortality, we must also become a celebrity.

Daniel Boorstin famously defined the term “celebrity” in *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, stating, “The celebrity is a person well known for his [or her] well-knownness.”<sup>10</sup> His declaration must then lead to a questioning of the concept of “well-knownness.” What is it that makes certain individuals notable to the general public? Essentially, how does one become famous? Most can agree that celebrities have often received notoriety for talents that have brought them some form of wealth and glamour. However, a mere skill cannot possibly be the defining factor to celebrityhood, as there are those individuals that are simply famous for being famous. For example, Internet fame has become a new form of acclaim, in which online celebrities have thousands and millions of followers solely based on their capability to take selfies or videos of themselves and share them with the public. Therefore, it can be concluded that “well-knownness” should be more closely associated with a person’s ability to create and develop a fan-base, a cult-like following.

For many, celebrities are magnetic enchanters, and their images are inescapable. They can be seen on the cover of magazines and tabloids at the check out line of grocery stores, and moviegoers willingly pay \$9 to see them on the big screen. Also, thanks to the topical, yet intrusive, trending sections on Facebook and Twitter, social media participants cannot help but come across the leaked batch of naked celebrity selfies. As Redmond asserted, “Seeing the celebrity is not an option but a condition of modern life.”<sup>11</sup>

Redmond further discussed the effects of this kind of celebrity gaze, stating, “In contemporary life we are repeatedly invited to gaze longingly at the celebrity. The images that circulate of them are ones that often require a concentrated stare, a voyeuristic look, predominantly built out of desire and longing.”<sup>12</sup> Through the social media platform Instagram, I have developed this sense of longing by becoming a

perpetual spectator into celebrities' lives. Rather than seeing invasive paparazzi images, I am allowed a glimpse into their daily activities, which humanizes these godlike creatures and leads me to believe, "Hey, they are just like me." However, I also see the images of them living luxuriously, riding on yachts in the Caribbean and taking selfies with other A-listers at after parties. By looking at an intermingling of the everyday and enthralling, I enrapturedly gaze at these images and imagine myself in their place, creating an illusionistic desire to become that celebrity.



Figure 5

By drawing Kim Kardashian's 99 Instagram posts from November 2014 in my series *theofficial\_kimkardashian: 1 Month, 99 Posts*, I truly had to examine and look at those images. The format of Instagram forces users to constantly scroll, attempting to look at the most amount of information and take it in at the fastest possible rate. However, by fixatedly looking at each of her images individually, I was able to create my own fantasy of living her life through those 99 images. I mimicked her photos and attempted

to replicate her profile. I became more than just @kimkardashian. I became @theofficial\_kimkardashian. However, the blind contour style ultimately disfigured the photos, transforming them to be either amusing or monstrous, thus illustrating the multifaceted effects of celebrity obsession. As a viewer and participant of these seemingly shallow and mundane social media platforms, I simultaneously take pleasure in it while also subtly critiquing what I see. Even though I recognize the grotesqueness of this culture, I cannot look away. I hate it. I love it. I gluttonously consume it.

Boorstin described our current condition as a series of “pseudo-events”, in which the media has developed a mirage of mythical situations and events that contain faux-importance, distracting fans and participants from the consequences of social reality. He stated, “We risk being the first people in history to have been able to make their illusions so vivid, so persuasive, so realistic that we can live in them.”<sup>13</sup> In my pursuit of this desire to become famous, I can become Lady Gaga by purchasing a conveniently packaged replica of her 2009 VMA outfit on Amazon for only \$6.99 (+\$6.09 for shipping). I can even teleport myself into a mystical land of red carpets and candy landscapes in the special 2012 edition of *The Sims 3: Katy Perry Sweet Treats*. This illusion alone can often times satisfy my desire for fame. However, what happens to my understanding of reality and personal identity when I embrace these simulated realities of fame as a part of my real world?



## **4: THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS MULTIPLE REALITIES AND BIFURCATED IDENTITIES**

*“The grand narrative has lost its credibility,  
regardless of what mode of unification it uses.”*

-Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*<sup>14</sup>

Although enamoring, most can agree that the desirable celebrity images that are fed to the public through mass media are fraudulent, Photoshopped fantasies. However, as a result of the constant influx of these images into my everyday life, I have become accustomed to this contrived sense of reality, adopting it into my life through the use of photo editing apps and Instagram filters. By embracing these illusions that have been reinforced through celebrity culture, my own conceptions of reality have become overshadowed and lost. As a result, reality has become subjective and open to manipulation, and a singular truth is nonexistent and unattainable. Rather, several parallel truths now concurrently exist within my plasticized vision of Hollywood life and culture.

When considering the possibility of multiple realities, Tia DeNora discussed Alfred Schütz and his understanding of this phenomenon, stating,

“[Alfred Shütz] described the idea of multiple realities in terms of the different provinces of meaning that constitute our experience – the paramount reality of the world of work (the everyday reality where we operate) and the other provinces of reality such as dream, theatre and religious experience. We may, for example, experience alternation as we awake from what – as we tune into the working reality – we recognise as ‘only a dream’. Though Schütz did not explicitly develop the point, it is

also possible to consider the ways in which our working, waking realities are themselves multiple, that is, capable of multiple interpretations.”<sup>15</sup>

Considering this theory in relation to perceptions of fame, it is clear that multiple truths of a celebrity can exist in tandem at a single moment. I might think she is a feminist hero while you might think she is a slut while he might think she is a talentless hack. Truth is now open to interpretation.



Figure 6

In my video and installation *No hay banda*, I address these multiple schizophrenic perceptions of reality in the dreamlike world of Hollywood. The video is separated into six realities (or dreams) that each represents a singular conception of fame through the eyes of pop star Miley Cyrus and the characters of David Lynch’s film *Mulholland Drive*. While one reality reflects the dreamscape of Hollywood glamour and festivity with mansions and nonstop partying, the next scene soon becomes a nightmare of Illuminati control and conspiracy over the powerless puppets of the entertainment industry. However, none of these realities are long lasting. With only a one-minute window allowed per segment, the viewer is only given temporary glimmers into each of these worlds.



Figure 7

It is through the constant transitioning in and out of each of these realities that the viewer is hypnotized into a hypnagogic state. As each segment fades in, it represents a new reality. It is only after the viewer begins to understand this conception of reality that it starts to fade out, introducing a new reality again. This constant construction and deconstruction process then leads one to question the entire conception of objective reality. Within this viewing process, when am I dreaming and when am I awake? Does it matter? Essentially, it is through this never-ending looping in and out of realities that the dreaming and waking worlds collide. Thus, by juxtaposing the two sources, I created my own world that constantly fluctuates between dream and reality, waking and sleeping, fantasy and terror.

To fully understand the effects of these multiple realities of fame and celebrity on the individual, I will like to examine the career of Miley Cyrus. She first began her life in the spotlight in the hit Disney comedy series *Hannah Montana*. From the formative ages of fourteen to nineteen, Miley portrayed the show's lead character Miley Stewart, an average teen girl that lived a double life as the teen pop sensation Hannah Montana.

With the simple brunette to blonde transformation, she was able to keep her true identity a secret, living, as the show's theme song suggests, the "best of both worlds."

Much of Cyrus' real life was easily transferred into the show, developing a transmedia narrative that fully integrated truth with fiction. For example, although her character's original name was "Chloe Stewart," producers decided to self-reflexively change the name to "Miley" after the actress was cast for the part. Also, Cyrus' real-life celebrity father, country star Billy Ray Cyrus, was chosen to depict her father on the show. According to Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience."<sup>16</sup> The Hannah Montana franchise is perhaps one of the most successful displays of transmedia storytelling. By creating a hybridized narrative that fused Miley Cyrus, Miley Stewart, and Hannah Montana into a singular being, the fantasy created in the television show became a part of Cyrus' real identity, or at least her audience's conception of her identity.

After the end of the TV series in 2011, Miley attempted to shed her adolescent image, shocking the public with her drastic transformation into a seductive, salacious sex kitten, successfully killing off the Hannah Montana persona forever. According to Redmond, "Her toxicity is a marketing and promotions strategy, nonetheless, to ensure career longevity and profitability; to ensure her aging fan base keep loyal, and that others will be attracted to her through the re-positioning of her brand."<sup>17</sup> Thus, by openly embracing the taboo of teen sexuality and perversity, Miley Cyrus successfully rebranded herself, constructing her identity to benefit her current image and career. However, this then leads us to question the correlation between the public's perception of Miley Cyrus and the reality that is Miley Cyrus. With so many conceptions of the

young celebrity, from sweet and innocent to raunchy and profane, what is real and contrived?

When considering the publicized life of Miley Cyrus, it is not difficult to connect the contemporary pop icon to the plot of *Mulholland Drive*, a film that forces its viewers to consider issues of bifurcated identities, as well as the possibility of multiple constructed realities within Hollywood culture. In the film, Naomi Watts depicts the bright-eyed Betty Elms, a young aspiring actress seeking success in Los Angeles. It is there that she meets and falls in love with “Rita,” a beautiful, mysterious, and amnesiac woman. Throughout the story, there are many seemingly disjointed scenes and characters that fluctuate between the dreaming and waking worlds, and as the story progresses, there is a moment where the narrative completely shifts. It is during this deviation in the film that Naomi Watts is adapted to the role of Diane Selwyn (an entirely contrasting character to Betty) that is a failed actress fighting depression due to her unrequited love for Camilla Rhodes, played by the same actress that portrays Rita. Driven by love and jealousy, Diane arranges to have Camilla assassinated by a hit man; however, terrorized by guilt and nightmarish visions, Diane is driven to kill herself, concluding the film.

Although the director David Lynch has refused to clarify the meaning and symbolism within the film, several analysts have developed theories and interpretations regarding the plot discrepancies in *Mulholland Drive*. A.E. Denham and F.D. Worrell postulated,

“Betty/Diane seems to be two profiles of a single woman – an aspiring actress presented by way of two personae, within two, contemporaneous biographical episodes. In both profiles, Betty/Diane is in love with another woman – the further double persona of Rita/Camilla. Countless minor

biographical overlaps work to establish the common identity of Betty/Diane as a temporally and spatially continuous individual.”<sup>18</sup>

However, the strong contrast between the naïve, optimistic Betty and the downtrodden, vengeful Diane invites viewers to question how they could possibly be the same person. Essentially, which person is real and which one is an illusion? Most hold to the idea that Betty is the idealized version that Diane creates for herself in an attempt to escape her nightmarish situation. It is within this dream that she also reforms her ex-lover Camilla into Rita, an empty shell of passivity that is fully dependent on Betty for support and knowledge.

Denham and Worrell continued on to say, “Even if Betty is only a dream of Diane’s making, it is a dream drawing in part on first-personal memories of Diane as she once was (or imagined herself to be) – before she was deformed by the base machinations of Hollywood and the complex emotions of a failed love affair.”<sup>19</sup> The effects of this deformation is also evident in the real life example of Miley Cyrus, whose recent and very public break up with actor Liam Hemsworth seemingly prompted many of the songs on her latest full-length album *Bangerz*. In her track “Someone Else,” she croons about her past lover, “I used to believe love conquered all ‘cause that’s what I’ve seen in movies. Come to find out it’s not like that at all. You see real life’s much different.”<sup>20</sup> When listening to these lyrics that attribute fabricated love in movies to Miley’s misconceptions of “real life,” one cannot help but wonder if Hollywood is really to blame for Miley’s and, in tangent, Diane’s tragic situations. Or is this all a mirage within a mirage? Are these songs and films that challenge the structures of Hollywood merely perpetuating contrived fantasies and spectacles within the system they are questioning? By intermingling the world of Miley Cyrus and *Mulholland Drive* in my work as an artist, I address these internal dilemmas, equating Betty to Hannah Montana and Diane to today’s Miley Cyrus, thus reflecting both the damaging effects of

Hollywood exposure and fame, as well as the development of multiple realities through bifurcated identities.

## 5: (ALMOST) FAMOUS FAME WHORES AND BASIC BITCHES

*"Fame, it's not your brain,  
it's just the flame that burns  
your change to keep you insane."*

-David Bowie, "Fame", 1975<sup>21</sup>

It is no longer good enough for me to simply live; I want to be memorialized and have the masses take selfies with my star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Regrettably, I cannot sing or dance my way to glory, for not all are created equal in the eyes of the American Idol judges. However, while celebrity status was once achieved through talent and skill, certain reality television shows like *The Real World* and *Big Brother* have created a new phenomenon that has opened up the parameters of fame. Anyone now has the capability of becoming famous; all you need is a good audition tape.

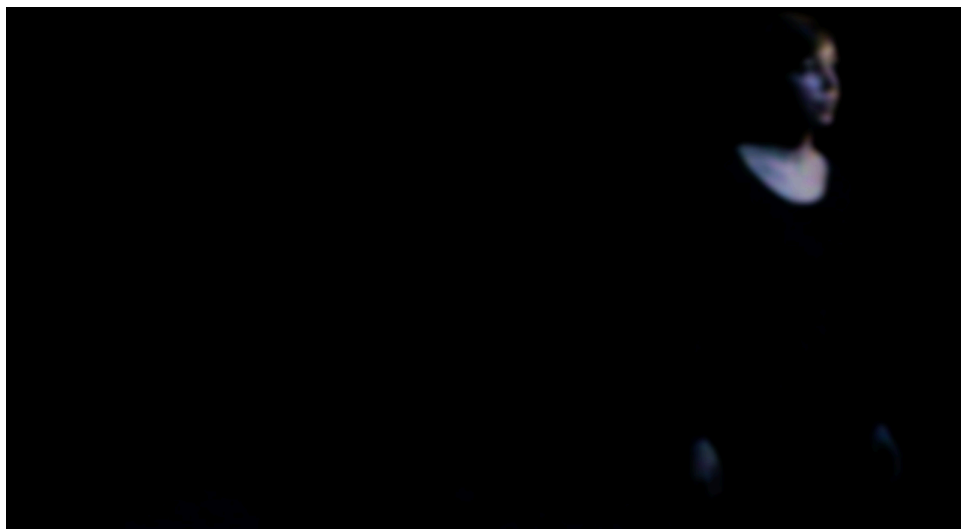


Figure 8

According to philosopher Mark Rowlands, "Our fascination with [fame], fascination sometimes bordering on obsession, has become the most pronounced cultural phenomenon of our time...Fame has gone wild."<sup>22</sup> In my sound and light installation *I'll*



*treat you good girl like you're famous*, which was then later translated to a video, I gave participants the opportunity to become fully immersed into the fantasy of fame. Upon stepping into the space, the viewer's role and perspective in this societal mirage of celebrity was shifted through an intense sensory experience. Acting as a "fame simulator," the installation, made up of pulsing camera clicks and fanatic cheering in tangent with strobing flashing lights, simulated the sensory paparazzi experience, fluctuating between being celebratory and menacing. Therefore, it was through this installation that the viewer was able to experience the spectacle of being a spectacle.

While many have been content to live the life of a celebrity through only mirroring and illusion, there are those who have gone beyond mere imitation and have entered the realm of fame through new avenues. With the creation of reality television and the Internet, fame has become accessible to all who seek it. It is through this that the modern day fame whore has emerged. Urban Dictionary defines a fame whore as "An individual who is willing to do anything, regardless of how humiliating or demeaning, to achieve notoriety. More often than not, this involves appearing on multiple reality television shows and/or 'private' sex videos 'leaked' to the press."<sup>23</sup> Some well-known examples of fame whores include Snooki (the guidette from *Jersey Shore* and *Snooki & Jwoww*), Tila Tequila (the Myspace whore and porn star from *A Shot at Love with Tila Tequila* and *A Shot at Love II with Tila Tequila*), Farrah Abraham (the single mother and porn star from *16 and Pregnant*, *Teen Mom*, and *Couples Therapy*), and Heidi Montag (the spoiled diva from *Laguna Beach*, *The Hills*, and *I'm a Celebrity...Get Me out of Here!*). Perhaps the most notorious and successful fame whores are Paris Hilton and Kim Kardashian.

Susan Douglas used the MTV hit series *Jersey Shore* as an example of fame whore triumph in her essay "Jersey Shore: Ironic Viewing." In the reality show, which ran for

six seasons from 2009 to 2012, the eight characters of this show played up the Guido-Guidette stereotype with gravity-defying hairstyles and nonstop fist pumping. Millions tuned into this show on a weekly basis, simultaneously laughing and shaking their heads at the characters' ridiculous and disgusting antics. According to Douglas, we can't help but shame the fame whore, because the reality TV formula constantly puts us in the position of the ironic viewer. She stated,

"Irony offers us the following fantasy: the people on the screen may be rich, or spoiled, or beautiful, or allowed to party nonstop, but you, oh superior viewer, get to judge and mock them, and thus are above them. Many MTV shows elbow the viewer in the ribs, saying, 'We know that you know that we know that you know that this is excessive and kitschy, that you're too smart to read this straight and not laugh at it.'"<sup>24</sup>



Figure 9

So often, watchers of reality TV create this entitled hierarchy due to the stereotypes and situational manipulations carried out by these shows. However, through her performance work, artist Ann Hirsch calls us to not shame fame whores for their actions; rather, we must learn to accept them. In her project *A Basement Affair*, she

appeared on VH1's reality show *Frank the Entertainer In a Basement Affair* as an undercover performance artist, unbeknownst to the viewers and production crew. In the show, fifteen girls competed for the love of Frank (previous star of *I Love New York*, *I Love Money*, and *I Love Money 2*), all while living in his cramped parents' house. Speaking on her genuine performance as the quirky, shy "Annie," Hirsch commented, "Originally, I went on the show to do a wacky performance piece, attempting to play up the ridiculousness that is reality television and the characters it produces, a satire on a genre that is already a satire of itself...But ultimately, I wanted to become a Famewhore."<sup>25</sup>

By molding real people into predetermined characters, reality television often times perpetuates stereotypes and validates them by posing the experiences of the participants as "real life." Many then ask, "Why does anyone choose to be on a show like this? Why would anyone even want to become a fame whore?" The desire to be desired by an adoring public is a shared aspiration of many men and women, alike; however, those that pursue fame are simultaneously shamed for it because they seem to unknowingly fall prey to the misleading fantasies of reality TV. Hirsch stated,

"Most educated, upper middle class people (such as myself) tend to look down upon the women on these dating shows as desperate, slutty and stupid. I believe there is more to the Famewhore than sheer stupidity. It is precisely the belief that it is purely stupidity and vanity by both production and viewers at large that allows for the continuing negative representations of women. Despite my inclination to not be viewed as a stupid slut, I had to become a Famewhore in order to shed my own assumptions about what it means to be one."<sup>26</sup>

However, in a post-Internet culture, we no longer need to be broadcasted on TV to become a fame whore. Now, there is social media, where everyone has the potential to be famous and upload their images online. According to Internet artist Anthony Antonellis, "Pop culture is used as a communicative currency, but unlike pop culture where celebrity status can be gifted to someone plucked from obscurity, today's social generation gears more toward recognition and merit based on communication."<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the more someone posts their images and thoughts online, the more likely they are able to become "Internet famous."

Through observation and active participation, I have concluded that 2015 is the era of self-obsession. Social networks and websites, like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, have created a generation obsessed with the self. Users of these platforms all want the "likes" for approval, the "favorites" for satisfaction. Yet in a sea of Instagram and YouTube accounts, everyone then feels the need to stand out from the crowd – to be special, an original. Thus, the greatest fear of any millennial is becoming a "basic bitch," a drone following the uninventive trends that are propelled by mass appeal.

A contemporary propellant of the term "basic bitch" is YouTube sensation Anthony Quintal (a.k.a. Lohanthony). He began his career in 2012 at the age of twelve, entertaining his audience with obscene language and a diva attitude. Since becoming an online fame whore, he has amassed over one million subscribers, uploaded over one hundred videos, and was nominated for an MTV Teen Choice Award. In his ten-second clip "CALLING ALL THE BASIC BITCHES," his most popular video to date, Lohanthony waves his leg in their air, flaunting his popularity, flexibility, and anti-basicness to his 2.5 million viewers and warning them all, saying, "Calling all the basic bitches, calling all the basic bitches, there is a new announcement...you're basic."

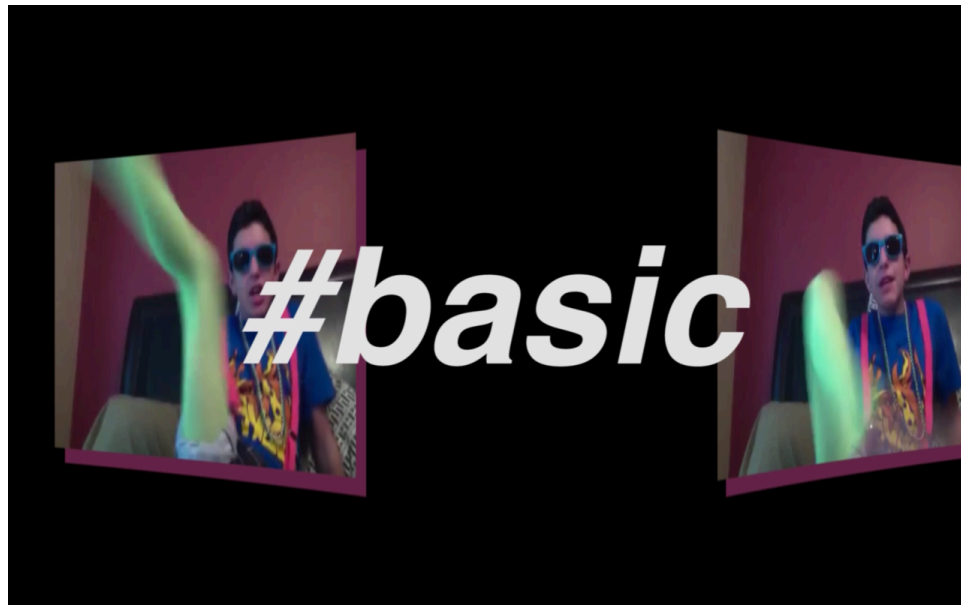


Figure 10

In my video *#basic*, I reinterpreted Lohanthony's original video and played on the repetition of Tumblr GIFs and millennial language. What does it mean to be a basic bitch in a post-Internet culture, where there is no original and everything is simply a copy of a copy of a copy – a low-res JPEG or GIF? When every fame whore is attempting to be Internet famous and reach that goal of one thousand Instagram followers, essentially no one is special. Basic-ness then becomes an inescapable cycle. "Calling all the basic bitches, there is a new announcement...*WE'RE basic.*"

## **6: CONSUMER CULTURE CLUSTER**

### **BUYING CELEBRITIES**

*“Because when I shop, the world gets better.  
And then it’s not anymore, and I need to do it again.”*

*– Confessions of a Shopaholic, 2009<sup>28</sup>*

According to Redmond, “The celebrity exists in an orgy of promotions, and celebrity culture can be argued to sustain itself through a series of synergetic, commercial industries, practices and processes that produce commodities for consumption purposes.”<sup>29</sup> In the fantasy of fame, celebrities have become branded products, manufactured for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, they have also been adapted to the role of marketing pitchmen and pitchwomen, a pool of products selling consumers even more products. Thus, by purchasing commodities that have been promoted by these glorified vessels of consumption, shoppers have been led to believe that they can incarnate the spirit of those celebrities through a simple purchase. Thank God for capitalism!

A clear example of this marketing strategy is Nike’s subsidiary brand Air Jordan, named and inspired by basketball star Michael Jordan. Over his two-decade career, with countless awards, trophies, and bronze statues, Jordan has been venerated as more than just a man – he made us all believe that he could fly. In 1984, his herculean powers were garnered in Nike’s first model of the Air Jordan 1. Banned by NBA Commissioner David Stern, the shoes became the bad boys of the court, making them even more desirable to the public. These products were seen as a physical manifestation of MJ’s supernatural powers, making its possessors believe that they could run faster and jump higher than any other competitor.

In Nike's classic 1989 collaborative commercial with Spike Lee's character Mars Blackmon, the question is posed: what is it that makes Mike the best player in the universe? It's not his height, the endless hours of practice, or his God-gifted talent. "It's gotta be the shoes." Shoes give their wearers a special power and status. They don't want the Payless knockoffs. They need *the* shoes, for they are the only shoes that matter. Redmond asserted, "The celebrity commodity is enchanted, and becomes like a holy artefact since it is imbued with the iconistic qualities of the celebrity and the mystical properties of the commodity, binding its fetishised nature."<sup>30</sup> By wearing Michael Jordan's shoes, buyers then believe that they can become like Mike.



Figure 11

My two-minute video *Like Mike* uses Michael Jordan to chronologically demonstrate this symbiotic relationship between celebrity and consumerism. The first section shows nostalgic found footage from the films *Space Jam* and *Like Mike* intermingled with repetitive audio that seductively whispers, "Make me like Mike" to the viewer. By utilizing 1990's and early 2000's entertainment sources, this portion of the film represents the godlike powers of the celebrity. The second portion of the film then transitions into slick images of rotating text and flashing clips from Mike Will Made It's

2013 music video “23” (featuring Miley Cyrus, Wiz Khalifa, and Juicy J). During this clip, mesmerizing images of Air Jordans commingled with Miley’s alluring features are shown while the audio hypnotically replays the song’s chorus, “J’s on my feet...So get like me.”<sup>31</sup> It is through this scene that the desire to be like Mike then transforms into a desire to be like the celebrities featured in the music video; however, this newfound ambition then mutates within a span of a few seconds to a divergent desire to make others “like me.” Through technological strides and advancements, the viewer no longer needs to become a celebrity like Mike or Miley. By simply owning a pair of shoes with Jordan’s silhouetted image that were later worn by Miley, the possessor is placed within the celebrities’ positions of power. In the last segment of the video, a montage of YouTube clips displaying novice-level basketball skills float skyward through cumulus clouds in tangent with R. Kelly’s hit song “I Believe I Can Fly,” clearly depicting the Internet’s role in instigating fame for the common person.

So do the Air Jordan shoes really give its wearers this “special” unknowable power, like when Calvin Cambridge (played by Lil’ Bow Wow) put on the MJ shoes in the 2002 film *Like Mike*? No, unfortunately that fantasy only exists with the help of Hollywood special effects. But that really doesn’t matter. The allusion is enough to satisfy the customer. By simply owning the shoes, the symbol of what they represent is passed on to those who desire it. We become like Mike. We become special. We become superhuman. We believe we can fly.

Additionally, the commodification of celebrity has also incited a cyclical pattern within the framework of fame. “Liquid capitalism suggests that life is made meaningful in and through glamorous lifestyle choices best embodied by celebrities. That these celebrities are disposable, have a limited life span, and can and should be replaced, creates a culture of constant consumption exchange where fads and fashion trends



produce a never-ending stream of new idols and new commodities to identify with and purchase.”<sup>32</sup> This point is evident when considering tween girl idol culture. While the Jonas Brothers, a familial pop trio, were the dominant heartthrobs of young girls all around the world between 2007 and 2009 (I myself attended three of their world tours), they were soon replaced by the baby-faced Justin Bieber, who was then later replaced by One Direction after their appearance in the British singing competition *The X Factor*. Fans cannot help but grow tired of these Disney and Simon Cowell products, because it seems that their commodified gaze only has a lifespan of two years. We constantly crave the new.

In a society that is built on consumerism and materialism, I have been bred to be perpetually enthralled by the novel, “which assigns the most illusory ends to our enterprises, condemning them to the creation of what is most perishable, of what must be perishable by its nature: the sensation of newness.”<sup>33</sup> After two years of use and abuse, it’s time to trade in my iPhone 4s for the iPhone 6...Plus – a classic situation for the shopaholic. A plethora of stores, like Forever 21, that sell cheap, trendy products feed my need for the new and the exciting. The store’s knockoff quality gives the masses a chance to be fashionable, to keep up with each trend for only \$12.99. And who doesn’t love getting new clothes? When I swipe my card against the reader, I hear the beep of satisfaction. It becomes an endless cycle to achieve that bliss. Sophie Kinsella described this shopping experience in her popular novel *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, stating,

“That instant when your fingers curl round the handles of a shiny, uncreased bag – and all the gorgeous new things inside it become yours. What’s it like? It’s like going hungry for days, then cramming your mouth full of warm buttered toast. It’s like waking up and realizing it’s the

weekend. It's like the better moments of sex. Everything else is blocked out of your mind. It's pure, selfish pleasure."<sup>34</sup>

In that moment, I enter into the realm of shopper's nirvana. *Buy, discard, buy, discard.* Although this feeling is temporal and will soon fade upon the tag's removal, if only for a few seconds, I experience the utopic. *Buy, discard, buy, discard, buy, discard...ecstasy.*

In order to constantly achieve this momentary bliss, the shopping mall has become my place of comfort. It is there that I find both emotional consolation and enlightenment – shopping as a form of therapy. However, when considering the space and spectacle of shopping, William Kowinski queried, "How can this [artificial mall culture] be such a powerful and attractive fantasy that it compensates for what's missing—like the sky, or a little bit of fleshly disorder? How can people accept roofed-over trees, patently artificial effects, and outdoor cafes that aren't really outdoors?"<sup>35</sup> Through research, interviews, and observations, he concluded that the practice of watching television, in which the artificial is perceived as a part of reality, has been transferred to our interactions in stores and shopping malls. For example, I constantly "channel surf" when watching TV, looking for something to catch my eye or peak my interest. When shopping, the storefront then acts as an advertised commercial, luring viewers to become consumers; however, if they are dissatisfied with the preview, they can simply "change channels" and move on to the next location. In summation, Mark Moss concluded, "The inconsistencies and incongruities of retail environments are processed through the eye of someone who is quite comfortable changing channels on a continuous basis."<sup>36</sup>



Figures 12-13

The installation *Life in the Woods*, a collaborative project with Christopher Thompson, celebrated the new and the novel with our sleek products and assemblages. Embracing the Walmart aesthetic of cheap, sterile, middle class familiarity and comfort, each sculptural element of the installation acted as an adaptation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs at the physiological level. Parodying Henry David Thoreau's attempt of escape through nature, we created our own Walden Pond with Amazon products and artificial replications of nature, a nirvana of consumer cluster. Why go into nature when a cleaner, brighter, more plastic-version can be Fed Ex-ed to you? Like when watching reality survivor shows, such as *Man vs. Wild* or *Survivorman*, I don't actually want to experience nature – I just want to *feel* like I'm experiencing nature. In the space of the installation, participants can lie on the Astroturf lawn and take in the fresh aroma of pine-scented air fresheners. The whirring of water filters can lull you into a tranquil state as you take in the scenic view of forested screensavers on a monitor. Again, the illusion alone satisfies and pleasures.

## 7: CONCLUSION

My work reflects my desires to embody the lifestyle and persona of another, whether that be a pop idol performing on stage in front of thousands of fans or a fame whore Instagramming her way to fame. However, this condition, this obsession, is not a solitary position only applicable to me; rather, this has become an almost universal phenomenon. Individuals with television and Internet access have been conditioned to mimic those that they see on the screen. Ultimately, the desire for fame has become the new cultural virus, mutating fame whores into a wild hoard of zombified basic bitches.

I believe that our society has become a reflection of our cultural circumstance. With the constant use of reblogging, retweeting, and regramming, many have become content to the constant, never ending recycling of existent material. It is through this process that originals and copies have become indistinguishably linked, and resultantly, the real has also become lost in the unreal. In this hybridized world of the absolute and the contrived, we all communally revel in our own delusions.

Now, the question still remains: does this imitative society negatively affect the formation of the individual, eclipsing personal identity? As a singular participant of the self-obsession trend, I cannot provide a fully encompassing answer to this predicament. Instead, it is through my culturally reflexive videos, performances, and installations that I allow room for the viewers to circumvent their own relationships and positions within this era of self-obsession. After all, my sense of truth is only one of the many cogs within the fame machine.

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# NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sean O'Hagan, "Arcade Fire: 'The clichéd rock life never seemed that cool to us,'" *The Guardian*, last modified November 27, 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/nov/28/arcade-fire-interview-sean-ohagan>.

<sup>2</sup> John Steinbeck, "How to Tell Good Guys from Bad Guys," *The Reporter* (March 10, 1955): 42.

<sup>3</sup> John Banville, *The Untouchable* (New York: Random House, 1997), 131.

<sup>4</sup> Joanne Finkelstein, "Identity," in *The Art of Self-Invention: Image and Identity in Popular Visual Culture* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 122.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>6</sup> Grela Orihuela and Bill Bilowit, "Moving Image: Alex Da Corte's True Life," last modified April 15, 2013, <http://whitewallmag.com/all/art/moving-image-alex-da-cortes-true-life>.

<sup>7</sup> Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Black & Red (Detroit, MI: Black & Red, 1970), paragraph 18.

<sup>8</sup> Irene Cara, *Fame*, with Michael Gore, 1980 by RSO, Compact disc.

<sup>9</sup> Sean Redmond, *Celebrity & the Media* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 23.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (London: Vintage, 1992), 57.

<sup>11</sup> Redmond, *Celebrity & the Media*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. The University of Minnesota (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 37.

<sup>15</sup> Tia DeNora, *Making Sense of Reality: Culture and Perception in Everyday Life* (London: SAGE, 2014), 84.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling 101," *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, last modified 2007, [http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia\\_storytelling\\_101.html](http://henryjenkins.org/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html).

<sup>17</sup> Redmond, *Celebrity & the Media*, 79.

<sup>18</sup> A.E. Denham and F.D. Worrell, "Identity and Agency in *Mulholland Drive*," in *Mulholland Drive* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Miley Cyrus, *Bangerz*, with Mike Will Made It, 2013 by RCA Records, Compact disc.

<sup>21</sup> David Bowie, *Fame*, with Carlos Almar, John Lennon, and Harry Maslin, 1975 by RCA Records, Compact disc.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Rowlands, *Fame* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008), 5.

<sup>23</sup> "Fame whore," *Urban Dictionary*, last modified October 22, 2009, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Fame+Whore>.

<sup>24</sup> Susan J. Douglas, "Ironic Viewing", in *How to Watch Television*, ed. Ethan Thompson and Jason Mittell (New York: New York University, 2013), 150.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Hirsch, "Shaming Famewhores Part I: On Becoming a Famewhore," *Bust.com*, last modified January 25, 2010, <http://bust.com/shaming-famewhores-part-i-on-becoming-a-famewhore.html>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Anthony Antonellis, "Impulse 101: An Essay about Art, the Internet and Everything," (MFA thesis essay, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, June 2011), 30.

<sup>28</sup> *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, DVD, directed by P.J. Hogan (2009; Burbank, CA: Touchstone Home Entertainment, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Redmond, *Celebrity & the Media*, 49.

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<sup>30</sup> Redmond, *Celebrity & the Media*, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Mike Will Made It, 23, with Miley Cyrus, Wiz Khalifa, and Juicy J, 2013 by Interscope Records, MP3.

<sup>32</sup> Redmond, *Celebrity & the Media*, 49.

<sup>33</sup> Paul Valéry, "Préambule," iv, vii, quoted in Walter Benjamin, "Fashion," in *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (London: Belknap Press, 1999), 73.

<sup>34</sup> Sophia Kinsella, *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2001), 27.

<sup>35</sup> William Severini Kowinski, *The Mall of America: An Inside Look at the Great Consumer Paradise* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 71.

<sup>36</sup> Mark Moss, *Shopping as an Entertainment Experience* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2007), 24.

# ILLUSTRATIONS



Stephanie Kang, *Jamji Jumokbap (Tuna Rice Balls)*, 2013, stills from video, 03:32 minutes.





Alex Da Corte, *TRUE LIFE*, 2013, still from video, 03:44 minutes.

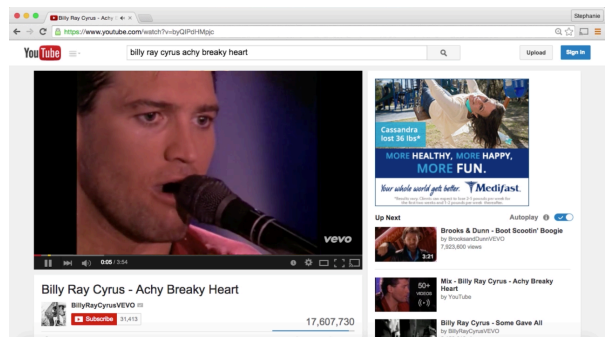
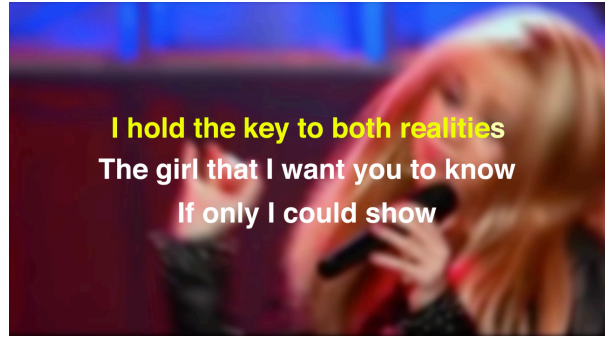




Stephanie Kang, *Running Man: Episode 195*, 2014, multimedia installation with multi-channel videos, astroturf, acupressure mat, potato, pants, aluminum foil, and portable DVD player.

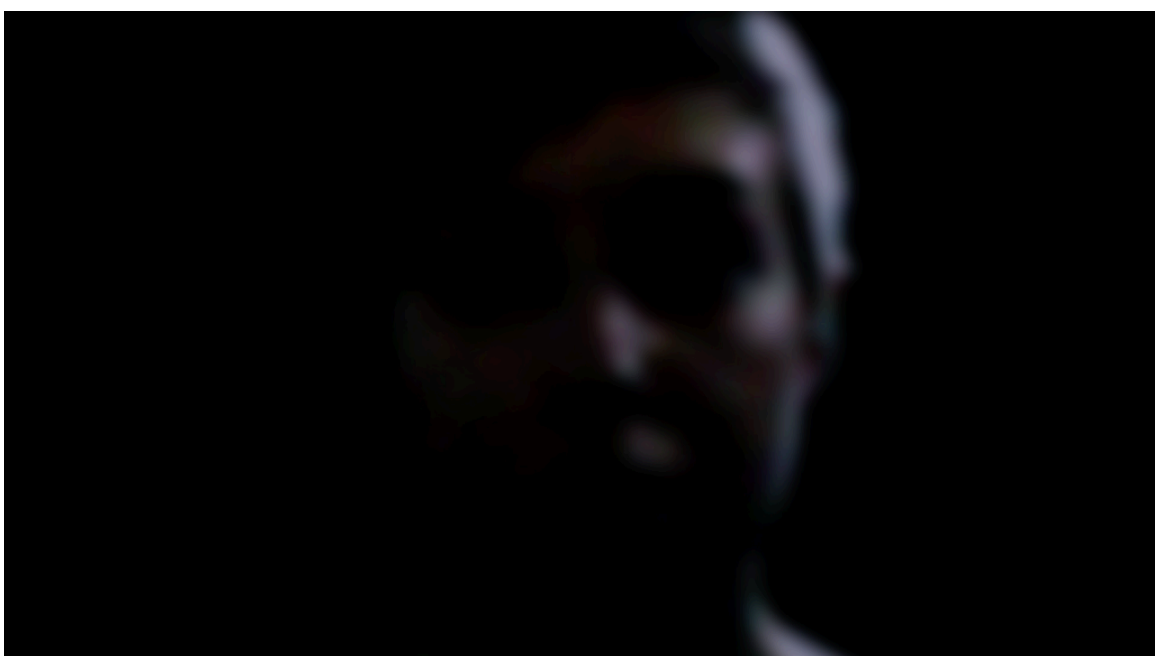


Stephanie Kang, *theofficial\_kimkardashian: 1 Month, 99 Posts*, 2014, Instagram account @theofficial\_kimkardashian, a sample from 99 blind contour drawings of Kim Kardashian's Instagram posts from November 2014.



Stephanie Kang, *No hay banda*, 2015, stills from video, 06:04 minutes.

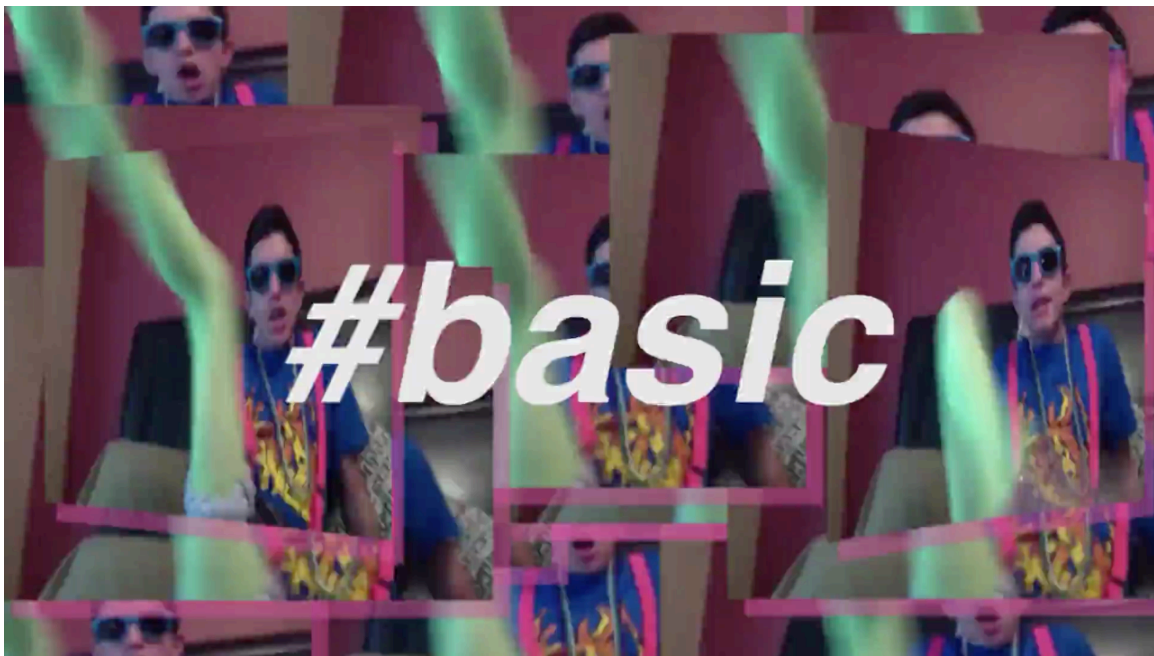




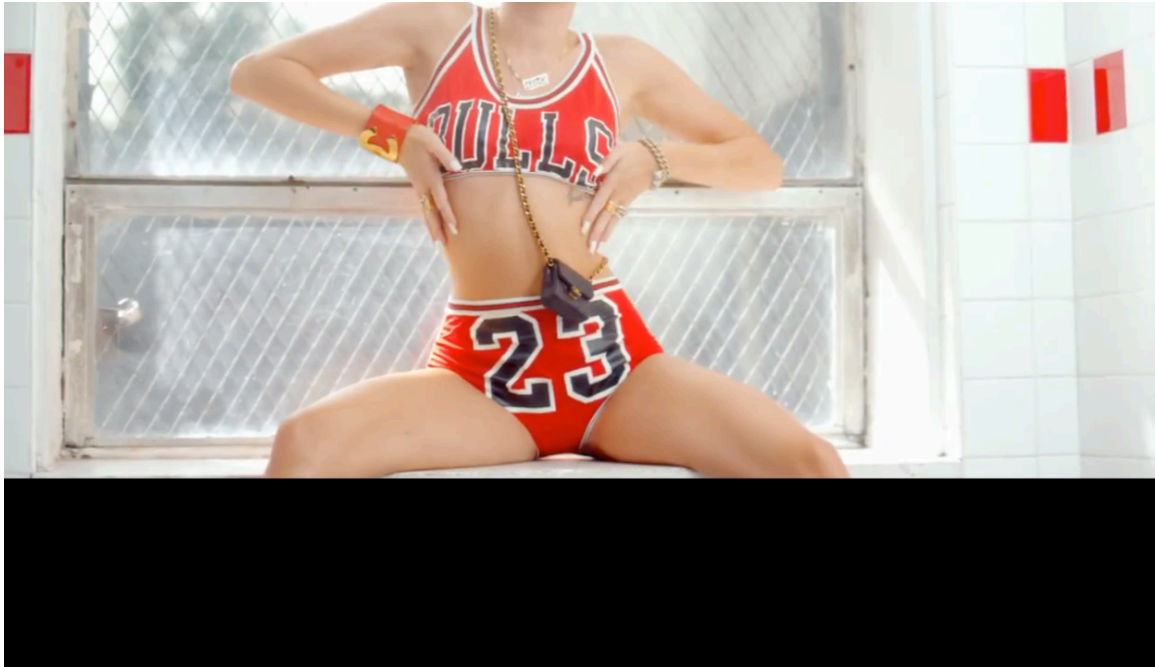
Stephanie Kang, *I'll treat you good girl like you're famous*, 2015, stills from video, 02:10 minutes.



Ann Hirsch, *Performing Reality*, 2010, documentation from a ten-day performance as a contestant on the set of the Vh1 dating show *Frank the Entertainer...in a Basement Affair*, produced by 51 minds (Flavor of Love, Rock of Love).



Stephanie Kang, *#basic*, 2014, stills from video, 01:23 minutes.



Stephanie Kang, *Like Mike*, 2014, stills from video, 02:42 minutes.





Stephanie Kang, *Life in the Woods*, collaborative project with Christopher Thompson, 2014, multimedia installation with astroturf, Gatorade, Starbucks cups, wood paneling, car fresheners, TV monitors, fish tanks, bit coins, goldfish and zebrafish, aquarium gravel, aquarium artificial plant, posters, clothes rack, overalls, and custom t-shirts.



# IMAGE CITATIONS

**Figure 1.**

Stephanie Kang, *Jamji Jumokbap (Tuna Rice Balls)*, 2013, still from video, 03:32 minutes.

**Figure 2.**

Alex Da Corte, *TRUE LIFE*, 2013, still from video, 03:44 minutes.

**Figures 3-4.**

Stephanie Kang, *Running Man: Episode 195*, 2014, multimedia installation with multi-channel videos, astroturf, acupressure mat, potato, pants, aluminum foil, and portable DVD player.

**Figure 5.**

Stephanie Kang, *theofficial\_kimkardashian: 1 Month, 99 Posts*, 2014, Instagram account @theofficial\_kimkardashian, 99 blind contour drawings of Kim Kardashian's Instagram posts from November 2014.

**Figure 6-7.**

Stephanie Kang, *No hay banda*, 2015, still from video, 06:04 minutes.

**Figure 8.**

Stephanie Kang, *I'll treat you good girl like you're famous*, 2015, still from video, 02:10 minutes.

**Figure 9.**

Ann Hirsch, *Performing Reality*, 2010, a ten-day performance as a contestant on the set of the Vh1 dating show *Frank the Entertainer...in a Basement Affair*, produced by 51 minds (Flavor of Love, Rock of Love).

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Stephanie Kang, *#basic*, 2014, still from video, 01:23 minutes.

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Stephanie Kang, *Like Mike*, 2014, still from video, 02:42 minutes.

**Figures 12-13.**

Stephanie Kang, *Life in the Woods*, collaborative project with Christopher Thompson, 2014, multimedia installation with astroturf, Gatorade, Starbucks cups, wood paneling, car fresheners, TV monitors, fish tanks, bit coins, goldfish and zebrafish, aquarium gravel, aquarium artificial plant, posters, clothes rack, overalls, and custom t-shirts.

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